

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 080976
ORIGIN IO-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /015 R

66011

DRAFTED BY IO/UNA:BJSHARP

APPROVED BY IO/UNA:JFTEFFT

-----030404 292257Z /63

O 292215Z MAR 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 080976

FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOL RPT HAVANA 0792 ACTION SECSTATE 28 MAR 78 QUOTE

S E C R E T HAVANA 0792

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET CU

SUBJ: CUBAN INTENTIONS TOWARD ERITREA

REF: STATE 74699

1. SUMMARY: CUBA PROBABLY PREFERS NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED
MILITARILY IN ERITREA, AND HAS OTHER INTERESTS WHICH COUNSEL
AGAINST SUCH ACTION, BUT IF THE PRESSURES GROW CASTRO'S
TROOPS WILL BE AVAILABLE. END SUMMARY

2. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS IN
CUBAN HIERARCHY, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE SERIOUSLY
CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE ADVERSE IMPACT ON CUBAN RELATIONS WITH
"RADICAL" ARABS SUCH AS IRAQ AND SYRIA AND ON CUBA'S
CREDENTIALS IN NAM, AS WELL AS MORE "MODERATE" ELEMENTS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 080976

CONCERNED ABOUT RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE AND U.S.,
STRONGLY PREFER TO KEEP CUBAN FIGHTING FORCES OUT OF
ERITREA IN FAVOR OF SOME INTERNAL "POLITICAL" SETTLEMENT.
SUCH CUBAN LEADERS CLEARLY RECOGNIZE BOTH THE COMPLEXITY
OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM IN ERITREA WHICH DOES
NOT LEND ITSELF TO A QUICK FIX BY FORCE, AND THE RIPPLING
INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS WHICH WOULD SURELY FLOW FROM

AN OVERT SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION THERE. (THE PRESENCE OF RELATIVELY FEW MILITARY "OBSERVERS" OR "ADVISERS" MAY NOT APPEAR TOO SENSITIVE EVEN TO THEM, HOWEVER.)

3. MOREOVER, THE CUBANS HISTORICALLY HAVE BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO ERITREAN SEPARATIST ASPIRATIONS--BOTH AS A REACTION TO FORMER WESTERN-ORIENTED REGIMES IN ADDIS ABABA AND AS A GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY WITH BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS, WHO WE UNDERSTAND HAVE PROVIDED SUPPORT TO THE "LEFTIST" ERITREAN LIBERATION GROUPS. THE 1977 CASTRO PLAN FOR A HORN FEDERATION, REFLECTING HAVANA'S SENSITIVITY TO THE ERITREAN FACTOR, REPORTEDLY INCLUDED SEPARATE STATUS FOR ERITREA (AND FOR OGADEN). HOWEVER, THE ALREADY-MANIFESTED HIGH DEGREE OF CUBAN SUPPORT FOR MENGISTU AND HIS EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THE ETHIOPIAN STATE INTACT PLACES IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS ON CUBAN FREEDOM OF ACTION. HIGH-LEVEL CUBANS HAVE TOLD US THAT, WHILE SOME AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA IS DESIRABLE, ANY POLITICAL SOLUTION MUST BE REALIZED WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF CONTINUED ETHIOPIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY AND MAINTENANCE OF ETHIOPIAN ACCESS TO THE RED SEA. (A FACTOR WHICH ALSO BEARS ON ETHIOPIAN PRETENSIONS IN DJIBOUTI--AN AREA ABOUT WHICH THE CUBAN PRESS IS NOW BEGINNING TO BUILD THE SPECTER OF AN IMMINENT US-ENCOURAGED SOMALI ATTACK). THUS, IF THE "LEFTIST" ETHIOPIAN LIBERATION GROUPS (EPLF AND ELF) CANNOT BE BROUGHT TOGETHER POLITICALLY,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 080976

AND CONVINCED TO END FIGHTING UNDER CONDITIONS ACCEPTABLE TO ADDIS, HAVANA MAY FEEL OBLIGATED, CONTRARY TO ITS PREFERRED INCLINATIONS, TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR MENGISTU'S EFFORTS IN THE NORTH. INDEED, THE CUBANS HAVE ALREADY SET THE STAGE FOR SUCH POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT BY CLAIMING THAT "REACTIONARY" FORCES IN ERITREA, DURING THE OGADEN INVASION, COORDINATED ACTIONS WITH THE SOMALI INVADERS, AND THAT SAUDI ARABIA AND THE REACTIONARY ARABS LOOK ON ERITREA AS A STEPPING-STONE TO DESTROY THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION (A POSSIBLE REFERENCE TO THE ALLEGEDLY SAUDI-SUPPORTED ELF-PLF).

4. THERE ARE OTHER POSSIBLE USES OF CUBAN FORCES THAT MIGHT BECKON IN THE AREA, EITHER AS ALTERNATIVES OR COMPLEMENTS TO ERITREA. ONE IS DJIBOUTI (MENTIONED ABOVE) AND ANOTHER IS THE PDRY WITH SUPPORT TO THE DHOFAR REBELLION IN OMAN AS THE OBJECTIVE. BOTH THESE ALTERNATIVES, HOWEVER, WHILE PRESUMABLY STRATEGICALLY INTERESTING TO THE SOVIETS AND OTHERS, WOULD SEEM TO HAVE SOME OF THE SAME DISADVANTAGES AS ERITREA SO FAR AS CUBA IS CONCERNED; NAMELY, THAT THEY WOULD FURTHER INCITE THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES AND PROBABLY WORRY MANY OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AS WELL, THUS DAMAGING CUBA'S POSITION AS THE PUNTATIVE LEADER OF THE NAM AND

HOST FOR THE NAM SUMMIT IN 1979. FURTHER CUBAN COMMITMENTS IN BLACK AFRICA, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD APPEAR TO RUN FAR LESS RISK OF DIVIDING THE NAM.

5. INDEED, COMPETING NEEDS (AND OPPORTUNITIES) FOR FORCES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA MAY MILITATE AGAINST FURTHER CUBAN INTERVENTION IN THE HORN AT THIS TIME. A STEPPED-UP ROLE TO THE SOUTH, "DEFENDING" BLACK AFRICA FROM RHODESIAN INCURSIONS AND ACTIVELY (ALTHOUGH QUIETLY) SUPPORTING GUERRILLA ATTACKS INTO RHODESIA WOULD BE BOTH POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY APPEALING TO CUBA, WOULD BE LOGISTICALLY MUCH EASIER THAN ADVENTURES IN THE HORN, AND WOULD HAVE THE ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGE OF COMPLEMENTING THE CONTINUING REQUIREMENT FOR SHORING UP
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 080976

NETO'S REGIME IN ANGOLA.

6. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, FIDEL CASTRO MAKES THE FOREIGN AND MILITARY POLICY DECISIONS FOR CUBA, AND HE IS SURROUNDED BY POWERFUL RADICAL ADVISERS, NOTABLY BROTHER RAUL, WHO STILL OUTWEIGH THE RELATIVE MODERATES AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS TECHNICIANS WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN. THEY ARE COMMITTED IDEOLOGICALLY AND POLITICALLY TO AN ACTIVIST "REVOLUTIONARY" AND "INTERNATIONALIST" POLICY (WHICH MOST RECENTLY HAS BEEN DEFINED AS SUPPORT OF MENGISTU) AND ARE NOT AFRAID TO RUN RISKS FOR THAT POLICY. MOREOVER, THEY ARE BEHOLDEN TO THE SOVIETS FOR PAST AND CONTINUING ASSISTANCE, AND ALREADY HAVE MADE A HEAVY INVESTMENT OF THEIR OWN IN ETHIOPIA. IF CUBA IS INDEED PRESSED HARD BY THE SOVIETS AND/OR ETHIOPIANS, AND ESPECIALLY IF IT SHOULD GENUINELY PERCEIVE THE ERITREAN SITUATION AS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT, CASTRO WOULD ALMOST SURELY AGREE TO UNDERTAKE AN ACTIVE MILITARY ROLE IN ERITREA-- REGARDLESS OF THE COSTS SOME OF HIS ADVISORS MAY PERCEIVE. IN THAT EVENTUALITY, HE WOULD NO DOUBT SEEK A PLAUSIBLE ALIBI TO MITIGATE ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS, PREFERABLY ON THAT ALLEGES PRIOR EXTERNAL (I.E., CONSERVATIVE ARAB AND WESTERN) INTERVENTION ON THE SIDE OF THE ERITREANS.

7. PARADOXICALLY, THE MOST EFFECTIVE WESTERN LEVERAGE TO COUNTERBALANCE ANY POSSIBLE CASTRO ERITREAN INTERVENTION MAY LIE IN "RADICAL" ARAB CAPITALS SUCH AS DAMASCUS, BAGHDAD AND TRIPOLI. CASTRO'S THIRD WORLD-ORIENTED INSTINCTS AND ADVISORS WILL RESPOND MOST READILY TO CAUTIONS FROM THE "RADICAL" LEFT. IT IS, OF COURSE, IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO JUDGE TO WHAT DEGREE THE "RADICAL"
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 080976

ARAB COUNTRIES NOW SEE THEIR INTERESTS ENGAGED IN ERITREA
AND TO WHAT EXTENT THEY CAN BE PERSUADED TO CAUTION
CUBA. (WE NOTE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE CUBANS AND IRAQIS
NOW APPEAR TO BE UPGRADING THEIR TIES.)

8. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO HORN OF
AFRICA COLLECTIVE COUNTRIES.
LANE

UNQUOTE COOPER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, PROVINCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE080976
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BJSHARP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780137-0048
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780312/aaaaajou.tel
Line Count: 185
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 58b9d1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN IO
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 74699
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3154953
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CUBAN INTENTIONS TOWARD ERITREA
TAGS: PINS, MASS, ET, CU
To: LAGOS USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/58b9d1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014